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The CIA at C
Cloak-and-Camera at

By Daniel Schorr

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My inquiry into William Paley's CBS was the strangest of my career. Explaining that I was impelled not by vindictiveness but by inquisitiveness, I asked to interview old bosses—and their bosses. All of them talked to me—most of them on tape. Often they were in startling contradiction to each other about the course of events and about the role of Paley, the chairman of the board. Paley himself sat with me for almost four hours over a two-day period, his tape recorder alongside mine—once "taking a feed" from his former employee when he accidentally erased part of his tape. We spent more time in direct conversation in February, 1977, than during all the years I had worked for him.

The discussion ranged from Paley's deep involvement in the Republican party to the reasons why I was forced out of the network after the disclosure of the Pike report in the February 16, 1976, issue of the Village Voice. *Finally, one question remained: What was the Paley-CIA connection?*

The luncheon that William Paley held in his private dining room on the thirty-fifth floor on February 4, 1976, for George Bush, the new CIA director, did not go as he had hoped. What was to have been a sociable welcome for the son of the late Senator Prescott Bush, warmly remembered as an early CBS board member, turned, after dessert, into an argument about CIA agents posing as reporters. It was started by Walter Cronkite, angry because he had been identified by a former television newsman, Sam Jaffe, as having appeared on an alleged White House list of journalists who purportedly worked for the CIA. To remove the stain from himself and journalism, Cronkite demanded that Bush disclose the list of news people who actually had been CIA agents. Bush was sympathetic to Cronkite's complaint and ready to consider ending the practice (which he subsequently did). He flatly refused to uncover those who had served the CIA in the past under a promise of eternal confidentiality. At the height of the argument, Paley stepped in, graciously supporting his guest and suggesting that it would be best to bury the past.

A week later it looked as though Paley might have had reason of his own for wanting to bury the past. That was when it had been my lot to go on the Cronkite show with the story based on the disclosure of Sig Mickelson, former president of CBS News, that at least two former part-time correspondents for CBS News in the 1950s had been CIA agents. The story's most startling aspect had been that Mickelson had learned about one of them, Stockholm stringer Austin Goodrich, from two CIA officers right in Paley's office, introduced by Paley, who listened while they identified Goodrich as their man.

Paley denies the story; Mickelson sticks to his guns. When CBS took me off the air in the controversy over the Pike report, William Safire wrote in his New York *Times* column that the fuss over the *Village Voice* was a smoke screen for the CIA story, that my real offense had been "exploring Paley's big secret on CBS."

I undoubtedly contributed to the tension, during my summer in limbo, with my own article on the op-ed page of the *Times* saying that the institutional arrangements made by news-media executives with the CIA were a more important subject for inquiry than the names of reporters who had—for equally patriotic reasons—operated under those arrangements. I noted the circumstantial evidence that Paley, Arthur Hays Sulzberger (the late publisher of the *Times*), and other media tycoons had cooperated to provide cover for infiltration of the news media. Congressman Otis Pike, chairman of the House committee, asked Colby at a hearing on November 6, 1975, "Do you have any people paid by the CIA who are working for television networks?" Colby murmured, "This, I think, gets into the kind of details, Mr. Chairman, that I'd like to get into in executive session." The room was cleared, and behind closed doors, Colby said that, during 1975, the CIA was using "media cover" for eleven agents, many fewer than in the heyday of the cloak-and-pencil operation, but no amount of questioning would persuade him to talk about the publishers and network chieftains who had cooperated at the top. A CIA director willing to endure the embarrassment of protecting the identity of Mafia collaborators was certainly not going to betray patriotic media proprietors.

When I embarked on my "CBS revisited" project, it was clear that the toughest part would be the Paley-CIA connection, protected by the double cloak of corporate secrecy and intelligence security. The most active period of CIA-media cooperation had been in the cold-war days of the 1950s, and there were few—if any—still around at CBS who knew what Paley knew.

One found clues indicating that CBS had been infiltrated. A news editor remembered the CIA officer who used to come to the radio control room in New York in the early morning and, with the permission of persons unknown,